

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5301

INFO USINT CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

S E C R E T BEIRUT 13353

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652; XGDS

TAGS: PFOR, XF, LE

SUBJECT: SAEB SALAAM'S IMPRESSIONS OF ARAB VIEWS ON PEACE
SETTLEMENT

1. EX-PRIME MINISTER SAEB SALAAM ASKED TO SEE ME
NOVEMBER 20 TO CONVEY IMPRESSION HE GAINED IN HIS
RECENT TWO WEEKS' STAY IN EGYPT, VISITS TO SAUDI ARABIA
AND KUWAIT, AND TALKS WITH FEDAYEEN LEADERSHIP. IT WILL
BE RECALLED THAT ON TOUR OF AREA BY SECRETARY ROGERS
AND SISCO TWO YEARS AGO, SAEB SALAAM WAS MOST PESSIMISTIC
LEADER MET, HOLDING VIEW THAT ARABS WOULD NOT ACKNOWLEDGE
RIGHT OF ISRAEL TO EXIST. FROM ALL HIS RECENT TRIPS AND
TALKS, SALAAM NOW SAYS, "I WAS WRONG: A REVOLUTION HAS
TAKEN PLACE IN ARAB MENTALITY." HE FOUND EGYPTIAN, SAUDI
ARABIAN AND KUWAITI LEADERS EAGER FOR PEACE. BUT MORE
SURPRISING TO HIM, WAS PACE OF DEVELOPMENTS AMONG
FEDAYEEN LEADERSHIP WITH EVEN EXTREMISTS LIKE SALAH
KHALAF, WHOM HE SAW LAST NIGHT, NOW READY TO SETTLE
FOR PEACE WITH ISRAEL.

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2. SALAAM SAID FACT IS ARABS CONSIDER THEIR HONOR
VINDICATED. EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN MILITARY ACHIEVEMENTS
DURING LAST MONTH'S WAR HAVE CREATED WHOLLY NEW
POLITICAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL MOOD. HE ALLEGED EVEN ALGERIAN
LEADERSHIP WILL NOT POSE OBSTACLES TO PEACE BID AND
SEES ONLY LIBYA AND IRAQ AS HOLD-OUTS. SALAAM SAID
THIS OFFERS UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR AMERICA TO BRING DURABLE
PEACE TO AREA WITH ALL THE BENEFITS IT WOULD
BRING TO US. HE CONSIDERS THIS IS TRULY "LAST CHANCE" BECAUSE
IF SADAT'S GAMBLE ON AMERICAN WILLINGNESS TO PRESS
ISRAEL TO MAKE REASONABLE SETTLEMENT SHOULD FAIL, THERE
WILL BE SERIOUS BACKLASH EFFECT. HE SAID ARAB
STATES, INCLUDING SAUDI ARABIA, WOULD THEN PERFORCE
PROCEED DOWN MORE MILITANT PATH. HE BELIEVED THAT NEWLY
FOUND UNITY OF ARAB WORLD WOULD PREVAIL AND IN A MATTER
OF TIME THERE WOULD BE FURTHER RECOURSE TO ARMS WHICH
HE DOUBTED ISRAEL COULD SURVIVE. IN SHORT, HE ARGUED, THIS
IS THE ONE LAST BIG CHANCE FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE
EAST AND IT IS ALL RIDING ON DR. KISSINGER.
BUFFUM

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NNN

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